

EPISODE 1

Title: DRC: Band **Staff Benda Bilili**
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If you want to use additional music, here it is: DALET: Learning by
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Characters:

1 Narrator, male or female voice

Voice-overs

Roger Landu, male, 18

Papy Manzambi, male

Jean Claude Bofondo, male

Vincent Kenis, male

Ricky Likabu, male

INTRO

Hello and welcome to today's program in the Learning by Ear series about people who contribute in different ways towards changing our society. In today's program we are going to feature a disabled young man who uses his musical talents to entertain and at the same time to educate society. I am sure you would like to know more about this young man. So let's go all the way to Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo!

1. SFX Song Staff Bilili

2. Narrator

The band STAFF BENDA BILILI. They are based in Kinshasa, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This group has 12 musicians, all of whom are disabled. They suffer from the Poliomyelitis-Virus. Some of them have to use wheelchairs. Others are on crutches. Roger Landu is 18, the youngest member of this musical group. Roger's wheelchair is painted green and has little cat's eyes at the back. At the age of 12, Roger was kicked out of his home and began to hang about the streets of Kinshasa. He lived like this for more than 6 years. Then he decided to join the Staff Benda Bilili musical group.

3. Soundbyte Roger Landu 1 (Lingala)

"To tell the truth, I was a child who lived in the streets without any care. I used to sleep in the open at night. I used to roam around the city, in the areas which were overcrowded with people whom I entertained with my harmonica, and that is how I earned some money. Sometimes I played music with the rest of the group, but all the time that I lived in the streets, I never stole anything from anyone. I was inspired by the great musicians of our country and I always wanted to play like them."

4. Narrator

The instruments used by the Staff Benda Bilili musical group are traditional, made by themselves. For example Roger made an instrument out of hide. It sounds like a violin.

5. SFX Song of Satonge:

He named it 'SATONGE'

6. Soundbyte Roger Landu 2 (Lingala)

"My instrument is like a lead guitar, but really it is not a guitar. It is called SATONGE. I used a stick, a Tomato can, and a string. I made this instrument ten years ago. I think in future I will be an expert of the one string SATONGE instrument".

7. Narrator

Roger says that his SATONGE instrument has made him very famous among his group - Staff Benda Bilili. The other musicians admire him for his skill in playing it. He remembers the way he was scolded by his mother during his childhood when he sang and played his SATONGE.

8. Soundbyte Roger Landu 3 (LINGALA)

“Satonge is an African traditional instrument which has not been introduced yet in modern music. I am the one who introduced the SATONGE. I started playing this instrument when I was only 9 years old. My mother used to scold me every day because she did not like to see me singing at this young age. But I simply ignored her disapproval and went on to realise my dream. I used to sing to my friends, I thought what I was doing was just a childish habit but I carried on with the habit until now. I have even recorded songs using my SATONGE”

9. Narrator

Staff Benda Bilili is a musical group that has caught the attention of Mr. Vincent Kenis, a Belgian music producer. Kenis played a big role in the recording of the group’s first album. He recognised from the very beginning the special vibes of the Congolese musicians.

10. Soundbyte Vincent Kenis (French)

“The group - Staff Benda Bilili – has really captivated my attention because of their Rumba style blended with other colours at the same time. It is fantastic and really nice. Their music is unique because they use peculiar instruments. Take for example this young man Roger, who plays a self-made instrument whose sound I improved. The SATONGE sounds like an electric guitar and produces a rock-like sound. But when you take a close look at this instrument, it is not a guitar. People love the sound of this instrument.”

11. Narrator

After being in the group and the little success Benda Bilili is having on the streets - Roger Landu`s life has not improved – in terms of money or living conditions. But, nevertheless, he does not beg like he did when he was living on the street. However, Roger keeps on earning a bit of money from people who like listening to his SATONGE instrument:

12. Soundbyte Roger Landu (Lingala)

“Whenever someone gave some money, I played for them. But I did not fully realise how important the Satonge was. Everywhere I go I take my instrument with me. I have become famous because of my Satonge. Actually it was this instrument that led to me meeting the music producer of Staff Benda Bilili group - a Frenchman called RENAUT. He was the first person to be impressed by my instrument and he decided to introduce me to the band. I have now been in this band for five years. And that in spite of a disability.”

13. Narrator

However, the lives of all members of the group Staff BENDA BILILI is still challenging. Every evening the group goes from restaurants to pubs to play for a little money as Jean Claude BOFANDO, the leader of Staff Benda Bilili group explains.

14. Soundbyte Jean Claude BOFANDO (French)

“Not only me but the whole group faces difficulties in life. This is because we do not have a shelter. Some of us spend the nights around the city and others at disabled centers or at orphanages. To be honest our lives are not good, we don’t know how to feed our children. We keep on struggling and refuse to die from hunger in our own country, simply because of being disabled.”

15. Narrator

The situation of disabled people in Congo is quite difficult. Roger and his friends can’t do any heavy manual work. They have no health insurance. So they decided to make their living by playing music. To encourage other disabled persons and to educate people about Polio, the Staff BENDA BILILI band has composed a song about the disease. To talk about the infection disease Poliomyelitis is still important. Just last year a number of polio infections prompted a mass vaccination campaign - the disease was thought to have been eradicated in the vast country.

The song of Benda Bilili urges the parents to take their children for immunization against Polio.

16. SFX Staff Benda Bilili - POLIO Song

17. Narrator

Many parents have responded positively to the song about Polio. Among them, Papy MANZAMBI, who believes that the group needs to be supported for their good work.

18. Soundbyte Papy Manzambi (French)

“What inspired me is the kind of music these young men play. It is very good music. I urge all good people to help these young men in whatever way they can. My advice to other disabled persons is that they should follow the example of - STAFF BENDA BILILI – these young men work very hard to sustain themselves despite of their disabilities.”

19. Narrator

Music has turned Roger Landu into an important person in his band – and finally in his family. Before, because of his disability, his family had kicked him out.

20. Soundbyte Roger Landu (Lingala)

“Because of my instrument and my work, sleeping out on the street is a thing of the past. I am now back with my family. I am now concentrating on how to improve my life and that of my family. I want to have a place of my own.”

21. Narrator

Through their music which is loved by many in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Staff Benda Bilili group has proven that “disability” is not “inability”. Roger Landu biggest dream is to improve the lives of his family through his music.

22. Soundbyte Roger Landu (Lingala)

“My wish is not to be a car mechanic, a builder or a carpenter. I dedicate my whole life to music. I hope to get worldwide recognition.”

23. Narrator

Well, Roger Landu’s dream is shared by all 12 members of the Staff Benda Bilili group, as Ricky LIKABU explains.

24. Soundbyte Ricky Likabu

“Now we are progressing well with our original music. Before, we were playing copyrighted music from different international musicians. We now believe that we are going in the right direction.”

25. Narrator

The Staff Benda Bilili group has opened up international opportunities for itself and for people who are stigmatized because of their disabilities. Roger Landu is determined to continue improving his musical talent and also to keep on contributing to society. Roger Landu is indeed a role model!

26. SFX_01_SONG Staff Bilili

OUTRO

Do you think the same? Is Roger a role model for you? Send us a message. And if you would like to listen to this program again on the internet or tell a friend about it, please visit our website at:

www.dw-world.de/lbe. And that's all for today's program about people who contribute in different ways towards changing the lives of others in our society. Until next time Goodbye.

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